



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

with the loyal States, especially upon the great question of slavery and freedom. It is a subject upon which very incorrect ideas prevail, and its importance is not generally understood. In our opinion, it was the turning-point of the rebellion. When Missouri was saved, the rebellion was virtually crushed. If Missouri had been lost, even temporarily, to the Union, Kentucky would have gone too, and the plans of the Confederacy would have been completely accomplished. European recognition would have followed, and the whole face of affairs been changed. But we must leave this subject to a future number and to abler hands.

ART. IX. — *History of West Point; its Military Importance during the American Revolution, and the Origin and Progress of the United States Military Academy.* By Captain EDWARD C. BOYNTON, A. M., Adjutant of the Military Academy. New York: D. Van Nostrand. 1863.

THE simple name of West Point is of as wide and varied significance as that of any spot in American geography. It has more than one special history, and yet all its histories are blended together in harmonious connection, linking the past with the present, the physical with the moral, the glories of our "heroic age" with the stern necessities, and, let us hope, the greater glories of present power and justice and hope. The spirit of Washington still walking upon its plain, and speaking from its inland summits, inspires and encourages the youthful soldiers who are, perhaps, yet to strike manful blows against a mighty treason, and lend their aid in saving the country which he and his worthy compeers fought to establish through long years of weakness and hardship and despondency.

West Point may be considered, then, in reference to its importance as a military position in the Revolutionary period; or it may be treated in its character as the seat of the only military school of the nation.

In the former view, it is full of undying interest, and might

readily demand all our space. The military student sees in it a decisive strategic point, of great importance to both the American and British armies.

To the British its possession was an object of great value, because, could they occupy it, they would remove the chief obstacle to a junction between the forces of General Sir Henry Clinton in New York and those of General Burgoyne in Canada. To keep the navigation of the Hudson River clear and unimpeded was to have the means of sending supplies and troops in either direction, and thus to have two noble bases of operation,—New York city, with its splendid harbor, and Canada, with its importations of men and supplies from England by the St. Lawrence.

To the Americans it was of double and most vital importance. Not only did its bold, fortified headland, its terraced forts and batteries, and its flanking redoubts on Constitution Island and the opposite shore, impede the junction of the British forces and their use of the river, but it protected the single, well-guarded ferry which kept open the communication between the Patriot forces in New England and those in the Middle and Southern States. It is not too much to say, that the permanent loss of this post would have done more to retard our final success than any other military event that could have occurred at that time, and possibly have so discouraged our armies as to lead to some unsatisfactory compromise.

Early engaging the attention of the Congress, boards of officers were appointed by whom plans were devised for a thorough system of fortification, which should include Martelaer's Rock on Constitution Island, both banks of the Hudson, and means for the obstruction of the river, to prevent British vessels from passing in either direction. The command was intrusted first to General George Clinton, and soon after to General Putnam; but before the plans could be carried out, a large and well-appointed force, under Sir Henry Clinton, swept up from New York, in October, 1777, stormed Forts Montgomery and Fort Clinton, and threatened to secure the desired junction with Burgoyne.

But that general was having his own troubles in the net of

Saratoga. To the inexpressible mortification of Sir Henry Clinton, the news came that Burgoyne had surrendered to Gates; and so, after occupying West Point for not more than twenty days, Clinton dismantled the works, and took himself back to his head-quarters in New York.

From this lesson, sad as it was, the Americans learned wisdom. The fortifications, modified by their late painful experience, were pushed forward with great vigor. A great boom and chain — some links of the latter are still preserved at West Point — were stretched across the river, and the Hudson, as a strategic line, was entirely lost to the English. How valuable they considered it we may learn from their secret efforts afterwards to obtain possession of it, through the intrigues of André and the treachery of Arnold.

But to the student of military history it presents other claims. Here Washington had his head-quarters for a time; here he issued the order of congratulation to General Wayne for his brilliant storming of Stony Point; here, in an order still preserved at the Military Academy, he denounced the irreligious and unmanly vice of profane swearing.

But, besides such interests, here was the scene of the rarest, because the most real, romance of the Revolution, — truth stranger and more heart-stirring than any fiction. Here Arnold sold his country, in devilish purpose at least, and his soul, for ten thousand pounds and a British epaulette; and here, to gain the great strategic point of the North for his king and his general, André madly threw away a bright young life, which might have become, in more honorable actions, as famous as that of the captor of Quebec. His sad fate, while illustrating a noble resignation in his ignominy, also displays the good common-sense and incorruptible firmness of Washington, which called forth the anathemas of British poetry, the denunciations of Lord Mahon, and the admiration of his own countrymen. The story, in all its details, is never old. We recur to it with new interest whenever we think of West Point in the Revolution.

Thus much of the Revolutionary history. Besides these historic charms, Nature has endowed the spot with fairest beauties. It is a place for a poet to dream in. The broad expanse of the

Upper Hudson, shut in by distant Newburg, is like a noble lake in some alpine region. Cro' nest and its companion summits, a thousand feet high, rise beetling over the little skiff which drifts at their feet, grander than Ehrenbreitstein and "the castled crag of Drachenfels." Wandering backward from its present beauties to the hallowed memories of the older day, the poet tunes his harp to tell how

"Sights and sounds at which the world have wondered
Within these wild ravines have had their birth;
Young Freedom's cannon from these glens have thundered,
And sent their startling echoes o'er the earth;
And not a verdant glade nor mountain hoary
But treasures up within the glorious story."

Truly, in other pages, and under other inspirations, West Point, had it no other history, would tempt the man of fancy and feeling to emulate the poet in other fables suggested by the *genius loci*, a spirit at once Protean, fantastic, and fascinating. But the older history and the perennial poetry of the place are not within our present scope. The former is to be found most carefully and lucidly set forth in Captain Boynton's excellent and elaborate book; and the latter remains, as far as we are now concerned, whether it burst into song or not, the possession of every sensitive soul that visits the beautiful spot,

"When the moon looks down on old Cro' nest,
And softens the shades on his shaggy breast."

The design of this paper is chiefly to consider the Military Academy at West Point, in its organization and progress, its practical workings, and its results. The prominent part it is playing in the present war has made it a topic of wide discussion. It has its sworn friends, ready to do battle for it *à l'outrance*; it has its bitter, uncompromising, hereditary enemies, who, from generation to generation, have tried to destroy it, — men who now represent the minority of sixteen, who, against the vote of ninety-five, refused to join in establishing it on a permanent basis in 1808; and besides these two hostile parties, there are many who cannot make up their minds as to its utility, but who want instruction concerning it. To this third class we address ourselves, feeling very sure that

we cannot weaken the love or add to the hatred of the other two.

A dispassionate mind, then, would seek, we think, to discover its excellences, its faults, and its needs. To this investigation let us address ourselves. We must, of course, take for granted many of the historical statistics, on the part of our readers, of which if they are ignorant, we refer them to Captain Boynton's volume, and to General Cullum's register of the officers and graduates, — a beadroll of honor to which all soldiers must point with admiration and pride.

The first requisite of an army is good officers: they make the men. The ignorance and worthlessness of many of our officers during the Revolutionary War soon manifested the necessity of a military school; the Steuben tactics of Valley Forge even demonstrated the power of military education to make an army out of a motley crowd of half-starved, half-naked men. But during the fierce, protracted, and sometimes seemingly hopeless struggle of the Revolution, although committees were appointed, and discussions had in and out of Congress, it became evident that nothing could be done for military education until after the peace. It was the day of action, with whatever weapon could be grasped; it was no time to be learning elementary modes.

The peace came, and with it the necessity seemed to many to disappear. There were *quidnuncs* then — the species is not yet extinct — who applied the philosophy of the man whose roof leaked during the rain. You could not, they said, have a military academy during the war, because you were too much engaged in other matters. Now peace has come, and we do not want one.

But not thus reasoned our great men. General Knox made a report, a short time after peace was concluded, strongly urging the establishment of a school for the instruction of engineer and artillery officers; and West Point was proposed as the locality, because of its strategic importance, exposed to a *coup de main*, and yet the very key of the Hudson River. Thus it was designed to accomplish the double purpose of a military school and a strong military post. Washington and Jefferson, also, rendered wise by the experience of our armies,

wrote earnest letters advocating the establishment of a military academy.

By reason of these and similar endeavors, the Congress was led to institute, in 1794, more than ten years after the peace, a corps of artillery and engineers, to which a small number of cadets was attached, who were undergoing preparatory instruction for appointments in those arms. The corps and the number of cadets were increased in 1798, and provision, although very inadequate, was made for their education in elementary branches. This, although not even the beginning of the present Military Academy, was of great value, because it was a recognition, however feeble, of the need of military education ; and the need once generally acknowledged, sooner or later it will be supplied.

Such a twilight led at last to the dawning. By the act of March 16, 1802, the Corps of Engineers was made distinct from the Artillery, and was stationed at West Point to constitute a Military Academy. The cadets became warrant-officers of the Engineer Corps. It is not our purpose to consider the steps of legislation, always more or less impeded by the opposition of ignorant men, by which the Military Academy passed from its feeble and uncertain beginnings, with ten cadets and a few officers of the army as instructors, to its present eminent usefulness, with a faculty of authoritative professors and instructors, superior in numbers and composition, we believe, to that of any institution of learning in the country, with its corps of two hundred and fifty cadets, soon doubtless to be increased, and its long and brilliant list of alumni, whose names not only adorn our annals of war on every battle-field of this century, but are also intimately associated with the prosperity and honor of the country in all its pacific progress and relations.

If we search for the principal periods in its history, we shall find them sufficiently marked to indicate its progress at a passing glance. In 1801, before the legislation which incorporated the present institution, we are told that it was "under the direction of a private citizen (George Barrow), and was nothing more than a mathematical school for the few cadets that were then in service." Then came the new order of things, under the act of Congress in 1802. From this time there is

little of importance to record until 1808, when we find it under the energetic direction of Colonel Jonathan Williams, of the Engineers, the first superintendent, whose report of that year gives us clear information of its character and condition. Even then it was struggling for life. In the words of Colonel Williams, —

“The Military Academy, as it now stands, is like a foundling, barely existing among the mountains, and nurtured at a distance out of sight, and almost unknown to its legitimate parents. The questions that have been frequently put to the subscriber by members of Congress, evidently show that the little interest the institution has excited arises solely from its being unknown to those who ought to be, and doubtless would willingly become, its generous guardians and powerful protectors. Had it been so attached to the government (its real and only parent) as to be always with it, always in sight, and always in the way of its fostering care, it would probably have flourished, and have become an honorable and interesting appendage to the national family.”

This attachment to the government was exactly what it needed, but it was to strengthen only as the Academy gave proofs of its utility, as it was to do in the troublous times immediately following this report. Although war with England did not actually break out until 1812, the prospect of it was close and imminent for four years preceding the declaration. In 1812, the military necessities of the country placed the Military Academy upon something more like its present basis. The number of the Professors was increased by the establishment of chairs of Natural and Experimental Philosophy, of Mathematics, and of English studies. A chaplain was appointed, and the maximum number of cadets placed at *two hundred and sixty*. And yet there was much to be done. System and order were needed. Captain Boynton, speaking of the condition of things at that time, says: “The cadets were not regarded as amenable to martial law, no class-rank was established, no register of the classes was published, and, in the assignment to positions in the army, they demanded the right to elect such corps as seemed to them most satisfactory.” A master hand was needed to arrange a system and to put it into successful operation. And that master hand was found in the person of Brevet-Major Sylvanus Thayer, of the Corps

of Engineers, who became the Superintendent in 1817. Major Thayer remodelled the entire system of interior arrangements, supplying much that was original and excellent. Himself an early graduate of the Academy, who had vindicated the teachings of his Alma Mater by his personal conduct in the war of 1812, he had also studied abroad in the military schools of France, and had given special attention to the subject of military education. He thus brought to his task intelligence, well-digested practical knowledge combined with great energy, and, more than all, a peculiar gift of natural fitness, which soon displayed astonishing results. The historian of West Point, although required to give the earlier statistics of its progress, must date the efficient organization of the Academy, the harmonious union of its almost chaotic elements into a working system, to the Superintendency of Major (now Colonel) Thayer.

He organized the cadets into a battalion of two companies, further divided for purposes of drill into eight, and appointed meritorious and soldierly cadets as officers. This latter was, and has since proved itself, an admirable system, inciting the cadets to an honorable rivalry, and giving them practical instruction in command. He also established the office of "Commandant of cadets," who should be the instructor in tactics; and to this office were appointed by selection the most accomplished officers of the army. We need only mention the names of General Worth and General C. F. Smith, who were Commandants at different times, to show what models were placed before the cadets as infantry soldiers.

In the department of catechetical instruction Major Thayer was equally active and creative. He divided the classes into *sections* of from eight to twelve cadets each, so that each cadet, as a general rule, recited every day in each branch, — would that our colleges could compass this! — and required the publication to the cadets of weekly marks, so that every cadet might know exactly where he stood at the end of every week, — another plan which we commend to our colleges.

Major Thayer established class-rank, published an annual register, in which the classes were arranged according to merit,

gave great preponderance to the blackboard in recitations, compiled the excellent Regulations of the Military Academy, and introduced several new branches of study.

In 1818, Mr. Calhoun was the Secretary of War, and, however the country, to the latest generations, must abhor those principles which were at least one powerful source of the later mammoth treason, West Point owes much to his fostering care and attention. In a letter to the Superintendent, written in February, 1818, he declares the determination of the Department "to aid in elevating the system of discipline, and to create a spirit of emulation among the cadets," and he adds, "that in future wars the nation must look to the Academy for the skill to conduct valor to victory." It was by direction of Mr. Calhoun, in furtherance of this determination, that the names of the five most distinguished cadets in each class were annually published, as a mark of honor, in the Army Register. In the same year two general examinations of the cadets were established, in January and June, and Boards of Visitors were appointed to the June examination, selected from the most distinguished citizens in different parts of the country. Cadets were also now finally declared to be amenable to martial law, and brought before courts-martial for trial.

We are sorry, for want of space, to pass over in few words the useful administrations of Major De Russy, Colonel Delafield, and Colonel Brewerton. Under the two last the post of West Point was greatly improved, many new houses built, and the efficiency of the Academy in every way increased. The present Rebel generalissimo, Lee, was also for a short time the Superintendent, and a very efficient one, of the Academy.

In 1839, Mr. Poinsett, then Secretary of War, gave a new and most interesting feature to the Academy by the introduction of horses for cavalry and artillery exercise, thus giving completeness to the institution as an instructor in all parts of a military education. From that time there has been continual progress and development, and West Point at this time may claim not only to give the most thorough instruction in the branches it professes to teach, but to furnish as complete and harmonious a connection of those branches as it is possible

to adjust in one Academy and in the period of four years. We may state, in passing, that the average annual cost of the Academy to the country in late years is about \$160,000; while the entire expense to the government, from 1802 to 1863, is \$7,133,235.70. Let the intelligent reader decide whether this is much or little. Let him weigh the manifold duty done, in one scale, against the ponderable gold, in the other.

Before leaving this part of the subject, we wish to say a word respecting the Boards of Visitors, who annually assemble to witness the June examination, and to report to the War Department upon the condition of the Institution. In one view, they are beneficial. Appointed, by a regular system, from the different portions of the country, and from among men of influence, they keep the institution before the people, and carry with them to their distant homes some idea of its plan and its workings. But the members are generally selected, not for their military knowledge, but simply because they are men of station. They rarely bring intelligent scrutiny to their task, and as a general rule the reports of the Board of Visitors have no weight with the Department. It would be far better for the President to appoint distinguished military men on such boards, or to have distinct boards of inspection, one to please and give general information concerning the institution to the people, and the other to report intelligently upon the wants and faults of the Academy, with a view to their speedy supply and amendment.

With these very brief statements of the origin and progress of the Military Academy, we pass to the consideration of a few of the leading questions concerning the value of West Point to the nation. Is it a success? Has it been useful? Is it worth the outlay? Should it be sustained, and even enlarged? At first glance, we might wonder that these questions are ever asked; but, strange as it may seem, there are not wanting those who seriously propound them. While a large number—including, without an exception, we believe, all those who have had the honor to graduate there—are enthusiastic concerning its great excellence, its thorough teaching, the noble and brilliant actions of its graduates from the beginning, there have been, as we have already stated, in all periods of its

legislative history, bitter and uncompromising enemies, in and out of Congress, who have done everything in their power to break it up entirely, and leave us without any military school.

Let us look at some of the natural causes of this hostility. With some patriotic men it has been due to the fear of a military establishment, or even the nucleus of one, a miniature prætorian guard, which might endanger the liberties of the country. To such minds the pruning-hook is in great danger from the sword; a uniform is the Devil's livery, and an army only at home in Pandemonium. These abstract views, not espoused by the many, find a fallacious support in the assertion that a well-disciplined militia is the bulwark of the commonwealth. We want no army; the people are army enough. But those who torture this noble truth into a weapon against West Point, neglect to consider that good discipline must come by education, and West Point is after all only a training school to fit men to discipline the militia. Without this training, *militia*, as meaning *soldiery*, is a misnomer.

Again, the necessarily small number of cadets at one school, in so large and growing a country as ours, has led to the disappointment of many applicants who could not get appointments as cadets. Disappointed men become bitter. Grapes that cannot be reached after the most vigorous leaps, are sour; and so West Point is denounced.

And yet again, when, through the rigorous but just discipline of the Academy, it happens that the sons or relatives of narrow-minded and selfish men are dismissed for incompetence or misbehavior, the fathers or uncles feel themselves in honor and duty bound to oppose and attack an institution that dared to send away "one who was destined, under proper training and just treatment, to become a distinguished soldier." Unjust as this is, it has its source in human nature, and there is no more to be said concerning it. But we are told that West Point men are scornful and unkind in their treatment of volunteer officers, and that the latter become jealous and retaliatory. The vast difference, as a general rule, in military intelligence and utility between regular and volunteer officers may explain this, and we are compelled to allow that often the accusation

is just, based as it is, however, upon a fallacy. To this we shall presently recur.

These and other "idols of the tribe" or of "the den," may be mentioned as prime causes of the hostility which has been manifested towards the Military Academy; but surely our readers will see at a glance that such motives, and the actions to which they lead, are not worthy of serious consideration. If they exist as we have stated them, they fall to the ground by their own weight, and we need waste no logic upon them. Were it proper to cite individual cases, we could give numerous illustrations under each head.

But the question is not with such men, or their opinions. Let us rather study the character of West Point in its intrinsic and extrinsic relations, and inquire into the valid objections which may be made to it. We shall thus see whether it has succeeded in giving a good military education; in what respects it has failed; what it needs to make it better; or, if radically wrong, how it may be reconstructed and improved. Of course, we take for granted that there are few if any in this day who desire its entire destruction. Let us put our investigation in the form of answers to the patent objections which have been brought against it.

The principal objection now made against West Point training is, that it has not made great generals. It educates, and dwarfs in the process, drill officers, instead of making commanders.

Of course, those who make this objection will concede that it is equally forcible against all elementary military instruction in the actual art of war. No military knowledge, as such, can make generals. Generalship (*στρατηγία*, the art of leading armies) is genius, a gift of God to individuals; it is only soldiery that is an acquisition. But it is a truism to say that genius is most useful when fully instructed. As the poet who "is born" does not and cannot scorn learning and culture, so the general must be an educated soldier. The "Iliad" is the compend of the early Greek culture; an inspired Moses is learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians; the "Divina Commedia" owes its wondrous and powerful delineations not more to the wild imagination of the exiled Florentine than to

his varied knowledge of poetry, polity, and history, to the wars of Guelf and Ghibelline, Pope and Emperor. Milton must range over the entire scope of Grecian learning, borrowing from *Æschylus* and the later poets some of his choicest fancies and most striking expressions.

But why need we illustrate by "analogous instances"? *Cæsar* must use the Tenth Roman Legion, perfected for him at an earlier period and by other men; *Parma*, the forts and bridges of Italian origin; *Frederick*, the matchless drill of his father's tall grenadiers; and *Napoleon*, not only the tactics, organization, and cannon of the earlier wars of the Republic, but the early training under *Pichegru* and other eminent masters at the military school of *Brienne*.

Generals, then, are born and made. Genius is the germinating seed, development its growth into the full and stately tree. But further to carry out the figure, experience, long and even painful experience, is the wind and the rain, the light and the air, which must nurture this slow and real growth. The making process is slow and hard, whatever be the genius.

But granting that generals cannot be altogether made, that the germ must pre-exist, that great commanders are great geniuses, how is it with the large masses of men who aspire to be officers,—with the subordinates, who in numbers bear the proportion to generals of thousands to units? These stand in closer and more intimate relations with the soldiers: these should certainly be educated. Let us grant that they have only ordinary talent, such as men bring to the various business by which they gain their livelihood; what is to render this most useful? what but military education, an encyclopædia of natural sciences and industrial arts, mathematics, mechanics, physics, history, directly applied in all branches of the military art, with a knowledge of such languages as enable research in these branches, and enlarged communication with men?

Men who defend the instructions of West Point should meet the sneers with which some speak of West Point generals, first, with the concession that West Point cannot and does not arrogate omnipotence in giving men original genius, and then let them point to *Grant*, *McClellan*, *Halleck*, *Meade*, *Hancock*, *Hooker*, *Rosecrans*, *Sherman*, *Reynolds*, *Sedgwick*, and a hun-

dred others, as a tacit assertion that West Point has so fostered and instructed, if it have not created, genius, that no uneducated genius has been found fit to take the place of its educated developments. Quite as striking are the illustrations of military excellence among West Point men in the Rebel armies. Lee, Beauregard, Longstreet, both the Hills, Ewell, Johnston, Hardee, and a score of others, traitors and rebels though they be, are admirable soldiers and excellent generals. Where are the exceptions on either side? There are a few, among whom Banks and Butler may be named, but they are very few in comparison with the long list of "West Point generals." And let it be further observed, that the young men who receive appointments to West Point, in most cases, manifest in earlier life a decided bent towards a military career; they think they find in themselves a *genius* for war, just as one boy does for trade, or another for the bar, or a third for medicine; and we shall see that we are more likely to find military genius at West Point than anywhere else.

Another objection takes the harsh, and we think mistaken form, that West Point, which should, above all other institutions, inculcate national and patriotic sentiments, has been in reality a nest of treason, out of which rebels spring full-fledged at the first tocsin note of Southern treason. With the deepest sorrow, dissatisfaction, and regret at the defection of so many of our best West Point officers when the war began, we can not but regard this assertion as based upon an entire error. We speak from certain and intimate knowledge of a long period of West Point history when we say, that the doctrine of our perpetual nationality was ever placed in the fore-front of instruction and practice there; that the standard which displays it was always duly honored as our only emblem of sovereignty; that the morning gun which accompanied its graceful rise upon the flag-staff, and the reverberations that told of its nightly descent, taught their daily lesson of reverence and love; that a sectional opinion was never set forth; that the Constitution of the United States, as yearly expounded, was made to teach its truest lesson, that the Union meant our country, and that disunion was the rankest treason.

If, then, we are asked to account for the resignation of so

many of our best officers at the very first call of Secession, the answer is very simple. It was the result of that mistaken, pernicious, unconstitutional doctrine of State Rights which had been so long taught at the South, which had been fostered by a difference of manners, customs, and interests, principally due to slavery, and which was not a little aided by the favor of a party, and not a small one, at the North. Many of the young men who were sent to West Point had these principles instilled into them before they went, and while there were by no means removed from home teachings. The best, the most patriotic instructions of West Point, were not proof against the seductions of friends and the enticements of home. Principle is weak against such allurements. Many struggled hard against the enemy in the form of the Siren. Lee, one of the very best men among the Rebel leaders, an ornament to our arms before his disgrace, thought long and in solitude, with bitter tears and many prayers, before he flung away his loyalty for no better reason than a mistaken interpretation of the grand motto, *Noblesse oblige*. Stonewall Jackson, one of the grandest soldiers of the age, twirled his thumbs for an hour, and satisfied himself without a scrap of logic to help him;—"Secession is wrong, but, if Virginia secedes, I must go with her," and he went. He never fought, except at Antietam, off Virginia soil, and then he declared he was fighting in her defence. Indeed, he is asserted to have said distinctly that he would not fight elsewhere for the Confederacy. Huger held on long, and then, resigning, declared that he would remain neutral. How impossible! Longstreet, urged by his uncle, who had strenuously opposed Secession at first, remained in our service until his State seceded, and then, as he retired, declared that he would never fight against the old flag. Would that he had kept his word! Was West Point responsible for these things? As well charge upon Cambridge teaching the fact that her Southern alumni are now in Southern ranks, as charge the army defection to West Point. But treason is treason, and the shades are not very different, whether it lead Floyd and Cobb and Slidell and others to leave the fat offices of the capital for what they hope will prove fatter offices in the "Confederacy," or an army officer to send in his resignation. Or, with a closer

analogy, quite as well charge the navy with being a school of treason and hotbed of Secession, because Maury deserted his astronomic post, and Semmes and Maffit bravely burn helpless merchantmen, while they are very careful to elude the guns of our men-of-war.

But it is further urged that West Point is too exclusive. This charge refers, first, to the comparatively small number of cadets; secondly, to the mode of appointment; and thirdly, by a slight straining of the word, to the conduct and deportment of its graduates in the army. Let us look at these objections in their order. As to the small numbers that may be educated there, it should be remembered that the Academy was established on its present basis to supply our military needs in the day of small things; and, to show that it was more than sufficient for that day, we may state that, when the Mexican war broke out, and even after the battles of Palo Alto and Resaca, there was an excess of graduates, in the shape of supernumerary officers, attached to the different arms as Brevet Second Lieutenants. In the artillery arm alone there were more than twenty, who, however, were quickly absorbed by the losses in the succeeding Mexican battles. Our present needs are immeasurably greater, and the objection in this form is of great force. The number of cadets should be increased, or other schools established to instruct in partial military courses.

In considering the second form of the objection, which is brought against the mode of appointment, we are also obliged to acknowledge its validity. The members of Congress in both houses have each the nomination of a cadet, not annually, but for the four years' course. The President of the United States has the power to appoint a few *at large*, or from no special district or locality. We believe that the appointments have been honestly made, and as well as this mode will allow. There has been little if any nepotism. Poor men's sons are as often appointed, if meritorious, as those of the rich and influential. In what, then, is the system faulty? In that the appointers are not always competent judges, or cannot take the trouble to inquire much into the merits of special cases. Thus numbers go to West Point only to be sent away after a short sojourn; they incur the disgrace of dismissal, and carry

to all the points of the compass harsh and false statements of West Point rigors and injustice. But a far greater evil grows out of this. As each member of Congress can appoint but one, practically it often happens that only one or two can come before him with such claims as seem to merit his consideration.

To remove these evils, we propose that examining boards should be appointed — of competent officers — in various parts of the country, and that all young men of a certain age and physical soundness, who can bring testimonials of good moral character, and a prescribed amount of preparatory knowledge, should be permitted to appear before these boards. The examination should be careful and rigorous, and upon some of the subjects now taught in the first year at West Point, with a view of enlarging and elevating the curriculum there. In this way the best material would be obtained, the positions would be thrown open to universal competition, and the existing error of exclusiveness, growing out of the mode of appointment, be entirely removed. No harm can thus be done to anybody, while great good will accrue to the service.

There remains to be considered, under this general and somewhat vague head of exclusiveness, the charge of arrogance on the part of the *élèves* of the Military Academy. They look, it is said, with contempt upon all others, and despise even the honest efforts of volunteers to do their duty. Frankly confessing that this charge, sometimes at least, is not without foundation in truth, we must seek for the causes of such deportment before a final judgment upon it. We shall not justify it, but we think former circumstances, not hereafter to be pleaded to the same extent, will at least palliate it. We speak, of course, only of the conduct of West Point officers to other men in military positions; for in the great world, and to the mass of citizens, graduates of West Point are favorites, partly because of their manly bearing acquired in their early training. More than any other diploma in the country, that of the West Point graduate has been received as a passport to good society; it is even recognized abroad as the readiest claim of admission into the best circles.

To come back, then, to military men and matters, it is to be regretted that West Point men ever put on, as some do, an air

of contemptuous superiority towards volunteer and militia officers. What is the ground for such conduct? In the former days, when the army was small, there were very few regular officers — only here and there one — who were appointed from civil life. The roll of officers was made up almost entirely of West Point men. As a general rule, to which there were noble exceptions, civilians who became officers in the army gained their appointments through family influence, and were ignorant of the first principles of the military art, and mistaken in their conception of a soldier's life. Appointed to fill vacancies for which cadets had been struggling for four years, many of them dropped off from time to time, to avoid exposure, leaving the few real and honorable exceptions to pursue their solitary career.

It was at such a time, and towards such men, that the contempt or arrogance of the graduates was mainly displayed. It would have been better, indeed, to have done all in their power to elevate and educate the citizen thus appointed; but, wrong as it was, it was more natural for them to manifest an impatience at ignorance and inaptitude, and a dissatisfaction at the neglect of the claims of anxious and expectant cadets. But the complaint goes further, and justly too. It may be brought against the manner in which our regular officers have treated volunteers when brought into service with them. Here, as before, notwithstanding the education of the one and the common ignorance of the other, this was manifestly wrong. The volunteers who, in any war, give up business and comfort to support the honor of our arms, deserve great credit for their self-denial, and great patience with their early lack of military knowledge. Our experience has been, that they are eager to learn, modest in their endeavors, and acquire tactical knowledge rapidly. It is just at the beginning that they need counsel and comfort, instead of contemptuous rebuke, such as they have too often met.

But let no one, in his eagerness to support the volunteers, doubt for an instant that the real difference existed. In Mexico, when a battery was to be stormed, more than once have brave volunteers said, "Give us a company of regulars to lead us." West Point men, educated from childhood to be soldiers

by profession, sometimes forget what is due to patriotism and valor without pretension, and have treated volunteers badly. Such are the facts; such the reasons; we attempt no further vindication.

But all this, as to reasons at least, and we hope as to facts, is now changed. Honoring as we do the noble education imparted at West Point, we must see that there is another vast school of the military art and of military practice, in which the pupils number more than half a million. When Napoleon said to the *commissaire* who objected to give him an important command on account of his youth, "One grows old rapidly on the field of battle," his remark implied that one learned rapidly, gathered in months what book-knowledge would not teach in years, and, thus acquiring the practical, reasoned back with the greatest ease to the merely theoretical. And now West Point men, although they have a better basis of knowledge, although still and ever in the front of the military profession, have not the shadow of an excuse for assuming superiority to veteran volunteers, who have learned their best drill under many a storm of fire, and graduated with high honors on the immortal battle-fields of the Republic.

It is worth inquiry whether the Military Academy has not been kept too isolated from the great world. It is shut off topographically on a narrow point, guarded on all sides from ingress and egress. Unlike other colleges, it has not frequent vacations. For two years without intermission the cadets are there enclosed, and, although engaged in vigorous exercises of mind and body, they are as complete monks as ever dwelt in Vallombrosa, in duties, in dress, in conventual customs of cell and refectory. Then for a brief space of a month and a half they come out to see the great world, only to return to a similar monachism for two years more. We doubt the excellence of this system. It keeps them up in their studies, but it keeps them also from a knowledge of the world, at the very age when that knowledge is best obtained. The Academy is their microcosm.

If the Military Academy were placed in the heart of a great city, and the cadets allowed far more liberty, to see all that was to be seen, to be educated as citizens, while they were ac-

quiring the knowledge of the military art, — taken to inspect fortifications, to join the great processions on national festivals, to see new men-of-war, the founding of mammoth guns, the workings of the great industrial world, — we honestly think it would be far better for them and for the country; and all this might be done without lowering the standard of scholarship or soldiership in the slightest degree.

But, again, we are told that the standard of scholarship is too rigorous; that it sends away, for deficiency in one unimportant branch, those who excel in all others, and would make excellent soldiers. We have not time to dwell upon this subject. One thing is certain, for every young man sent away because he fails in *one* branch, another is appointed who will succeed in *all*. What can be fairer than this, especially when the government pays for entire excellence, and has the right to demand it?

We had much more to say, but our space is already filled.

By a comparison of the West Point curriculum with those of European military colleges, we find it the most complete as a preparation for any and all arms. All the cadets learn the entire course. The engineer officer is thorough in infantry tactics, the infantry graduates know how to build forts and work guns. There is a harmony of knowledge thus imparted. In the French and English schools there are special courses for the various arms, which carry the pupil farther in special studies, but do not give him the same general scope of military knowledge. As our armies are at present constituted, the West Point system is better for us than that of English or French schools.

In our present exigency, military instruction, generally confined to infantry and artillery tactics, is being introduced into a great number of our colleges and schools. That this will be but a temporary thing in many of them we must believe; but in the most important institutions this additional branch should be aided by the United States government, so that it may grow into an important component of the department of the arts. Long a warlike people, we are becoming, we must be, a military nation, and the best assurance of success will be, to teach all our sons that noble art which can defend our freedom, and

hurl back the invader, with readiness, address, and the least bloodshed. West Point must ever be the great mother of our future educational development in arms; while we cherish her, let us improve and increase her utility, and join to her elementary instruction such excellent schools of army practice as shall extend the knowledge of the art of war in America, and, by rendering us more formidable, diminish the chances of war.

We cannot close without thanking Captain Boynton for the vast amount of information so well collated in his book, and for his clear statement of the history and condition of the Academy from the beginning to the present time.

ART. X. — *Letter of the Secretary of War, transmitting Report on the Organization of the Army of the Potomac, and of the Campaigns in Virginia and Maryland under the Command of Major-General George B. McClellan, from July 26, 1861, to November 7, 1862.* Washington: Government Printing-Office. 1864. 8vo. pp. 242.

WE can conceive of no object capable of rousing deeper sympathy than a defeated commander. Though the first movement of popular feeling may be one of wrathful injustice, yet, when the ebb of depression has once fairly run out, and confidence begins to set back, hiding again that muddy bed of human nature which such neap-tides are apt to lay bare, there is a kindly instinct which leads all generous minds to seek every possible ground of extenuation, to look for excuses in misfortune rather than incapacity, and to allow personal gallantry to make up, as far as may be, for want of military genius. There is no other kind of failure which comes so directly home to us, none which appeals to so many of the most deeply-rooted sentiments at once. Want of success in any other shape is comparatively a personal misfortune to the man himself who fails; but how many hopes, prides, sacrifices, and heroisms are centred in him who wields the embattled manhood of his country! An army is too multitudinous to call forth that personal enthusiasm which is a